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## **Amazement and Urge**

Pianist Igor Levit sets the house on fire at the Kuppelsaal

By Henning Queren

HANNOVER. Sometimes it is the little things that indicate a great concert. When the pianist unfolds an iPad at the grand piano instead of ample sheet music – such as for the cadenza.

This is how Mozart is done today: with Igor Levit at one of his special home games at the very well attended Kuppelsaal and the Piano Concerto No. 22, eminently joyfully accompanied by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

Levit's piano playing is as flawless as usual, the sound has Gulda-like evenness. It is as much fun as it is amazing to listen to this sophisticated rapid passagework in the Allegro, with every single note being concisely articulated. This is about an invulnerable lightness which at the same time takes Mozart as seriously as necessary.

And about a pianist who states confidently how things are. The orchestra must indeed have such class as the team from Pittsburgh in order to be able to follow Levit's pressing playing appropriately. Conductor Manfred Honeck keeps the overview – the interplay of grand piano and the concertmaster's violin in the final movement being particularly beautiful. A Mozart event that is celebrated greatly with the corresponding applause.

It is only fitting that Igor Levit selects a rare cadenza - that of Saint-Saens - and then slaps it out with controlled verve. And then brings along an equally unusual encore: the nicely jazzy "Graceful Ghost Rag" by US-composer William Bolcom, after all Halloween is close.

Then, on to noble realms with Anton Bruckner's Ninth, which the master actually intended to dedicate to "the dear God". Which Manfred Honeck's interpretation makes seem plausible after all.

A Bruckner who does not ask any questions is celebrated here, invulnerable, as far as the excellent wind players of the Americans are concerned, and smooth in the strings (a pianissimo such as this, at the limit of audibility, has not been heard in the Kuppelsaal for a long time). Honeck stays at a middle range with his tempi, instead he focuses on celebrating noble details and brightly polished brass blocks.

The orchestra from Pittsburgh is marvellous indeed and plays alongside the big US orchestras, right at the front. A harrowing break was followed by applause galore and a Reger encore in the style of the old masters. ★★★★★